



Article by Etnia Nativa

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Native heritage story

Episode CCLXXVIII - 278

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During this episode, Etnia Nativa shares one story of two women from Alto Vista. Many of our native stories were passed down from generation to generation; one of them is of Maria Largo and Mamanchi, who, according to our tradition, belong to the history of Alto Vista (see "Island Insight", chapter 136). "Maria Largo" means long or tall Mary, "and" Mamanchi—a loving nickname for mom—were mestizo Catholic people who would have belonged to the Silvester, Alvarez, and Tromp families' names from Noord. Although we cannot identify their Amerindian families, however, they mainly descended from Caquetian nobles of that time.

By the island standard of those days, Maria Largo was a smart woman. Owning a large farm and extended gracing land, she had many animals inherited from Castilians brought from the old world. Maria Largo also had liberated many slaves who were in charge of taking care of her horses, donkeys, sheep, goats, pigs, and poultry. Maria's hundreds of goats, sheep, hoes, and some donkeys roamed free from Alto Vista to Westpunt and used to gather in an area known as Noord, around and close to the Alto Vista chapel. Here she had a rainwater-collecting reservoir made known as "Tanki di Maria Largo," supplying water to many in the vicinity.

Maria Largo lived in Alto Vista, but she owned many



houses elsewhere. The story goes that under each of those houses she built, she had buried a bar of gold as good luck superstitions. She was a person of great fortune, and everyone treated her with great respect. However rich maybe, she lived a very simple life in her own ways, so much that her everyday clothing was like that of any Native Aruban peasant, all white cotton trousers, a buttonless shirt called "cashaca," and a pair of "pargati" leather and fabric sandals, which were ideal for the unforgiving tropical heat. We know that one of the last places where Maria Largo lived was south of "Sero di Alto Vista," locally known as "Tinashi," a name that means "clay pot" or "the place of the clay pot."

The story goes that Maria Largo had a daughter known as "Mamanchi," and it is at this point where the story

gets a bit confused because for some people Mamanchi was Maria Largo's mother and for others Mamanchi was Maria Largo's daughter; however, Mamanchi was also known to own many animals, and until the 1960s there was a well-known plot of farmland called "Cunuco di Mamanchi," or Mamanchi's land, located in the vicinity of Curimiau-Turibana in the Noord area. Before she died, Mamanchi expressed her wish to be buried near Alto Vista, and so it was! Maria Largo and Mamanchi, who were well-known benefactors to the Catholic Church and Chapel, helped the poor and the sick of the island and liberated as many black and red slaves that she could by buying their freedom. She had spent time and gold in repairing and maintaining the chapel of Alto Vista. She was also well known in Curacao and on the mainland—actual Venezuela—in Coro's vicinity, where she had many families. Maria and Mamanchi were among the well-to-do natives who still had those noble souls devoted to others, and by doing so, they helped the island become a better place for the native Caquetio mestizo's.



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